

ADONIRAM JUDSON

“The Apostle of Burmah”





Disc

Mills Memorial Library

McMaster University

ADONIRAM JUDSON

"The Apostle of Burmah"

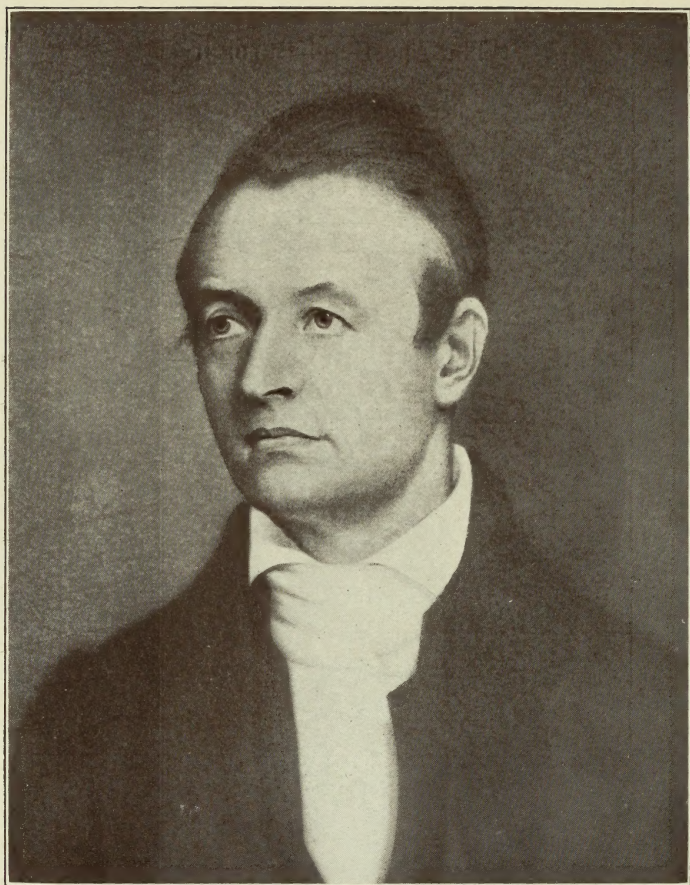
by

Rev. John MacNeill, B.A.

1914

"I feel it my duty to plod on while daylight shall last, looking out for the night, and ready to bequeath both the plodding and the profit to any brother who shall be willing to carry on and complete the work, when I shall have obtained my discharge."

—JUDSON.



Adoniram Judson

“The Apostle of Burmah”

— By —

Rev. John MacNeill, B.A.



*An Address Delivered in Walmer Road Baptist Church,
Toronto, Thursday Evening, February 26th, 1914,
under the auspices of the Women's Baptist
Foreign Missionary Society.*



The world situation into which Adoniram Judson stepped to his life work one hundred years ago was one of the most appalling and, therefore, one of the most appealing since the days of the Protestant Reformation. In the social, political and religious life of the whole race it might be said that the old order was changing, giving place to new. The spirit of the East and the spirit of the West were meeting for the first time in centuries upon the broad fields of India and China. The spiritual darkness of the heathen world became so dense that its long shadow fell across the conscience of the Christian Church, with the result that her leaders began to hear the summons of a world-wide obligation. In the political and social realms, with Europe for a centre, the shocks of revolution vibrated to the farthest bounds of civilization and the crumbling walls of outworn customs

were tottering to their fall. The French Revolutionists, crazed by the quick removal of their long borne burdens and insane by the sudden enjoyment of their new found privileges, were facing their myriad foes with a reckless daring and an almost superhuman strength. The ruthless hand of Napoleon was smiting the age-long systems of Europe into the dust and drenching the soil of every nation with the blood of her noblest sons. The whole fabric of society seemed to heave and sway. The war flame burned in the hearts of men everywhere and the garments of the nations were rolled in blood.

Ruskin has gone so far as to say that every great nation has learned its word of truth and strength of thought in war. I am not going to debate that question to-night, but to me it is a significant fact that at the moment when all Europe was blood-dripping in the Napoleonic wars, she gave birth to almost every great man who was to guide her better destinies for a hundred years to come. In that wonderful decade from 1800 to 1810, or you might stretch the period to 1815, England gave birth to Gladstone, Disraeli, Shaftesbury, Cobden, Bright, Browning, Tennyson, all born within ten years of each other. In that same wonderful ten years Italy suckled at her bleeding breasts, Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi and, a few years later, Victor Emmanuel—the four names that are worth mention in the last century of Italian history—four men who brought about the liberty of

Italian people and secured the unity of the Italian Kingdom. In that same wonderful decade Germany gave birth to her greatest son, Bismark; France gave us Victor Hugo; Wagner, Mendelssohn and Listz came in those ten years into the realm of music, while that same world throb seemed to stir the heart of America and there sprang into being, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher and last and most splendid of all—Abraham Lincoln—the flower of American manhood.

But if the kingdoms of this world swarmed with giants there were none greater than that galaxy of heroes who suddenly arose in the midst of the great movements of the Kingdom of God. The first wave of that mighty world tide in 1793 carried out to India those intrepid three—Carey, Marshman and Ward—that Imperial triumvirate than whom the Empire of the Caesars never saw a greater. Robert Morrison went in 1807 as the first Protestant Missionary to China—impatiently pacing the deck of the slow moving vessel that carried him thither, and when the captain, with a sneer, asked him if he thought he could make an impression on the millions of China, Morrison replied “No, but I think God can.” In that same wonderful period Robert Moffat answered the call as the Pioneer to Africa, and in the very year he went out to lay down his life, God was providing his successor, and at Blantyre in Scotland, David

Livingstone was born in 1813. And the same Spirit that breathed upon the Churches of England and ordained Carey and Marshman, Morrison and Moffat, moved in power also upon the Churches of America and they answered the far-off call of Burmah by one of their choicest sons—Adoniram Judson—worthy to stand in the front ranks of the missionary heroes of any country and in any age.

Ancestry and Youth.

Any true estimate of Judson must glance at his ancestry, for as Timothy Dwight once said, "Let him who would be great select the right parents." It could not be said of Judson as of Jonathan Edwards, that he was the product of seven generations of preachers, but we do know that through his father, Adoniram Judson, a Congregational Minister, and through his mother, Abigail Brown, his roots went down into the strong rich soil of Puritan blood. Tall, stately and grave, ruling his house with a patriarchal severity was his father; gentle, gracious and self-reliant, winning her way by love was his mother, and in this blending of strength and gentleness in his parents were laid the foundations of the well-balanced character of the future missionary.

There is not time to tell, except in the barest outline, the story of his life; how this precocious boy, taught by his mother, learned to read at the tender age of three; how his father, absent from home for a few days at that time, returned to hear his child read

a chapter of the Bible; how at seven years of age, lying on his back in the meadow gazing through a hole in his hat, he solved to his own satisfaction the astronomical problem that the world moved around the sun; how at ten he studied navigation and made progress; how at eleven, at the grammar school his proficiency in classics won him the title "Old Virgil Dug Up;" how at twelve he hungered for the reading of a new and extensive commentary on the Revelation; how at sixteen he entered Brown University; how he graduated at nineteen, the valedictorian of his class, an honor which he announced to his father with true Caesarean brevity in a letter of one sentence: "Dear Father, I've got it." Nor can we stop to tell how at twenty years of age he passed through a phase of atheism; how the sudden death of a college chum who was a free thinker, shook his mind into a serious mood; how he entered Andover College as a ministerial student, though he was not yet converted; how three months later came the great turning point in his life, in his conversion which involved at the same moment, his passionate, personal surrender to Christ and his dedication to the work of the Gospel Ministry. In the same year he became a member of the Third Congregational Church in Plymouth, of which his father was the Pastor.

The Missionary Call.

The inviting tinder of Judson's soul was ready to light under any spark and that spark fell from far off

Bristol, in a sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan and published under the title of the "Star of the East." It set forth the spiritual needs of the Orient, and in six months from the time Judson first read it, he had decided his future course. He would devote his life to the service of the heathen. The prospects at home were alluring; the finest churches would undoubtedly open to him in the centres of culture and power; but he deemed his gifts none too good for the heathen, and we can never make a greater blunder than to imagine that any of our gifts of heart or brain or tongue or money are too good to be cast away on the Foreign Mission Field.

But how was he to go? There was no Foreign Missionary Society on this Continent and his application to the London Missionary Society was not entertained. But God was getting ready. Down at Williams College a group of young men met regularly in a field near the College ground, and in the shelter of a hay-stack poured out their souls in prayer for the awakening of the Churches and the conversion of the heathen world. On that sacred spot there stands to-day a monument—The Haystack Monument—marking the birth place of American Foreign Missions. Four of these young men—Samuel Mills, James Richards, Luther Rice, and Gordon Hall—came to Andover College and drew around them a group of kindred spirits, of which Judson became leader. Their hearts were on fire to send and to be sent.

Banded together, they pressed their project upon the Association gathering of Congregational Churches in 1810, and in response to their ardent appeal out of that Associational meeting was formed the first Foreign Missionary Society of this Continent, known as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

The way was open, the call had come, and true to the traditions of most Ministerial students before and since, on the day that Judson found his life work, he found his future wife. Fresh from his passionate speech that morning in the Association meeting, he went with others to the home of Deacon Hasseltine for dinner. There for the first time he looked into the deep brown dancing eyes of Nancy Hasseltine. It is said that Judson fell so instantly and desperately in love that he was unable to eat a bite of dinner—a most unusual thing for a theological student. But he might well be excused, for Nancy Hasseltine was one woman in a thousand, and besides all that, it seems the infatuation was mutual. In that moment the mystic flame of love passed between their eyes and, though they did not say it to each other in words, they were saying in their hearts:

And then by the alder thicket
The turn of the road—and you !
Though the earth lie white in the noonday heat
Or the swift storm follow our hurrying feet,
What do we care—we two !

Ah! there lay before them a long and dusty road they little dreamed of, a road that was scorched by the fires of suffering and swept by the storms of sorrow, but the love that was born in that mystic hour never failed their hearts in all the after years. And so it came to pass that these two devoted young people—he at 24 and she at 23—with two others, Mr. and Mrs. Newell, set sail on the 19th of February, 1812, bound for India.

Two Changes.

The events, however, of the next few months were destined to change the whole course of Judson's life in two respects. In the first place, he sailed from America as a Congregational minister and landed in India as a Baptist. It came about in this way: Knowing that he was going among the heathen to form a Christian Church, he was lead to inquire afresh what the Christian Church might be. He expected also to begin his work in the neighbourhood of those three great Baptist Missionaries, Carey, Marshman and Ward, and felt that he must be prepared to fortify himself from a denominational standpoint to meet these champions of the Baptist faith. But Judson was conquered by his own weapons, for his study of the New Testament in his cabin during the voyage convinced him that the Baptist position was Scriptural. He yielded only after a great struggle and, though he knew it involved his immediate resignation to the Board that sent him out, though it meant the

refunding of the money expended upon his going, though he knew that he and his wife might find themselves without bread in a strange and heathen land—yet Judson and his wife did not flinch from the path of duty, and two months after their arrival in Calcutta they were baptized at the hands of Mr. Ward. There was another sweeping change in store, for, owing to the difficulties between the natives and the East India Company, the Government refused to allow the American Missionaries to remain in the country. They were ordered back to America but they contrived to make their escape in a vessel sailing to the Isle of France—and there they remained for nearly a year.

Shortly after landing Mrs. Newell died, and though she had been less than a year from home and her service was brief, she gained at least this great distinction—that she became the first American martyr in the cause of Foreign Missions. The Judsons ventured back again to India, but no sooner were they in the country than they were ordered again to leave by the first vessel sailing from the shores. Two vessels were available, one to England and one to Burmah. The one led to home, and comfort and friends; the other to loneliness, privation and foes, but they did not hesitate in their choice. And thus it came to pass that he who was intended for a disciple in India, became the apostle of Burmah, and when news reached America that Judson had become

a Baptist and his intimation received that if a Baptist Foreign Mission Society were formed, he would become its missionary, the challenge waked the scattered Baptist Churches of New England to self-consciousness and proved to be the crystallizing touch that shook their life into a solid unity of strength and purpose.

The Field.

The land of Burmah lies east of India—a kind of buffer between India and China—and at the time Judson came, had a population of about 7,000,000 of people. The Burmans are a rather superior type of the Asiatic people with Mongolian blood in their veins, though the aboriginal tribes remained the fragments of the wrecked races over which the waves of Mongolian conquest had passed. In Government they had an absolute despotism, as Judson came to know full well. In religion they had Buddhism, which presents a strong contrast to the Brahminism of India. Brahminism is pantheistic, Buddhism is atheistic, Brahminism is autocratic, Buddhism is democratic, Brahminism is individualistic, Buddhism is cosmical. Brahminism is based on the philosophy of universal being, Buddhism is based on the philosophy of universal seeming. Both believe in the transmigration of souls—what Tennyson calls the

“ Eternal process moving on
From state to state the spirit walk
And these are but the shattered stalks,
The ruined chrysalis of one.”

Buddhism, as you know, is based on the deepest pessimism and there is no way out of that vast and monotonous cycle of transmigration except in Nirvana—"the blowing out"—the total extinction of all being. You all know that Edwin Arnold has said the best word that can be said for Buddhism in "The Light of Asia," but the "Light of Asia" can never be a substitute for "The Light of the World." Believe me, there can never be any true missionary enthusiasm kindled in any Christian heart who believes that the religions of the heathen are good enough for the heathen themselves. No! The foul fatalism of Islam, the dense pessimism of Buddha, the ancestral worship of Shintoism, the pitiless necessity of Confucianism can never fully satisfy the soul and they will eventually sink beneath the sceptre of Christ. What Shelley said of Islam is true of all :

"The moon of Mahomet
Arose and it shall set.
While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon
The Cross still leads the generations on."

And now for a few moments will you get the map of Burmah before your mind's eye for we must glance at the four centres around which the 37 years of Judson's work revolved—10 years at Rangoon—3 years at Ava—2 years at Amherst and 23 at Moulmein.

Rangoon.

It was at Rangoon he began. He learned the language and conversed with individuals, though it

was six years before he preached in public. He prayed and labored but waited seven years for his first convert. He wrote tracts and translated the Gospel of Matthew. It was here he began his great work of translating the whole Bible into the native tongue. It was here their first baby boy was born and here they tasted that first bereavement so many missionaries have known when seven months later, they laid him in his grave. It was during this period that they both repeatedly passed under the scourge of fever and Mrs. Judson's health became so shattered that she was compelled to return to America for a year. It was from Rangoon that Judson attempted to plant a mission at Chittagong. He expected to be absent only a few weeks but he was smitten with fever, reduced to delirium and utter weakness, his absence grew into eight months and he found no means of sending any tidings to the brave little woman at Rangoon who awaited his return. She held the Mission together in the face of persecution. She continued faithful to her task, though the cholera raged round her and the death gong sounded night and day in the street. Her missionary associates, Mr. and Mrs. Hough, boarded the last vessel in the harbor to escape from the City. Against her will, they urged her on board, but at the last moment she tore herself away and returned to the Mission premises alone. "My husband," she said, "if he still lives shall not return to find his Mission Station deserted and himself in Burmah without a companion."

Ava and its Sufferings

For ten years that foundation work went on but Judson believed in pushing out into the regions beyond. In those ten years he had gathered a Church of 18 members, and leaving them in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Wade, Judson and his wife set out to plant the Gospel in Ava—the Capital City of Burmah and the Emperor's seat of power. Four years before he had gone to Ava at the risk of his life to present a petition to the Emperor for freedom of worship and protection of the State, but his petition was refused. However, the way now seemed open and even favorable to establish a Mission there and so they went. But the clouds were gathering. War broke out between Burmah and the English Government of India over some disputed territory between. The storm broke at once on all white foreigners in Ava, and the Judsons were called upon to taste the deepest sufferings of their lives. No tongue can tell the story of the next year and nine months. Judson, with the other men of the Mission, was thrown into the death prison at Ava. I have no desire to harrow up your souls with the story of that prison, only we need it at times to shame our self-indulgence and it is a part of the great sacrifice of the saints that fills up that which is behind the sufferings of Christ. For nine months Judson was confined in three pairs of fetters; for two months in five pairs and he bore these marks till his dying day. He lay in a prison that was

loathsome beyond words. It was alive with vermin ; it was reeking with filth ; it was sweltering in heat. They were huddled together like beasts. No refinement of cruelty was spared them. Their feet were placed in stocks. At night a long bamboo pole was passed between the feet of the rows of prisoners and by means of a rope and pulley at each end of the pole their feet were hoisted to a height that threw them back upon their shoulders and in that position they dragged through the sultry loathsome night. He was under the daily shadow of death, for almost every day at three o'clock the public executioner entered the prison amid a solemn hush and selected a prisoner for death ; no one knew when his turn might come.

At Oung-pen-la, the country prison, to which they were later removed, their sufferings were even worse. Beneath a scorching sun and bound together like cattle, the prisoners were marched barefooted over a roadway of burning sand and dust, whipped to their march again when they fell fainting by the way. One of them died by the roadside. The flesh was burned from Judson's feet and he would have been unable to proceed but for a faithful servant who tore his turban in two and wrapped a fragment around each of Judson's feet to protect them from the hot sand. But the finest heroism of those months was not displayed by the prisoners, but by the noble woman who remained at liberty. With her marvellous diplomacy and skill Mrs. Judson stood again and

again between her husband and death. With her winsome personalty she gained the confidence and interest of the Governor. Afterwards he confessed, that owing to her personal influence on three different occasions, he had deliberately disobeyed the orders from the court to put the prisoners to death. She bribed the keepers with tears and money to smuggle in to Judson the food she had brought. In the midst of those desperate weeks her baby girl was born, and when the child was 20 days old the mother carried her to the door of the prison. With feet and hands in fetters Judson crawled along the floor of the prison to the doorway to look into the face of his babe for the first time. At Oung-pen-la, to which Mrs. Judson followed her husband, one calamity seemed to follow another. Her baby contracted smallpox but she nursed it back to life. The three little Burmese girls to whom Mrs. Judson was as a mother, also fell under the disease, but she refused to cast them off and nursed them back to health. Finally, she herself developed a milder form of the disease, but it was not of herself she thought. Her baby was without food, but under a special permit secured by this dauntless mother, Judson was released while he carried the emaciated child through the village till he secured a native mother who would furnish it with food. To crown it all, in her weakened condition Mrs. Judson developed symptoms of the dreaded spotted fever, but she fought bravely on. She might have been seen on the road to Ava where she had to go for he

supplies and medicine, staggering in her weakness as she walked those weary miles, and fighting with the aid of laudanum the attacks of the scourge. But at last she could fight it no longer and for weeks she lay between life and death, finally winning her way back to a shattered condition of health from which she never recovered. Is it any wonder that in memory of those heroic days she is known as "Ann of Ava"? And when I think of how we groan under the little sacrifice we are called upon to bear I wonder that we dare to think that we stand in the same succession as these heroes of the Cross.

Amherst.

But the treaty of Peace in 1826 brought the sufferings of the Judsons to an end, and leaving Ava, the centre shifts to Amherst—a new and rapidly growing port on the West coast of Lower Burmah. It was there the darkest sorrow of his life overtook him. While he was absent unwillingly on a Government embassy to Ava, his noble wife fell under the hand of fever and with none about her but the poor native converts, her soul went home to God. They buried her under a hopia tree. Her husband returned to find her gone, and six months later he laid her little baby girl by her side. We may well stop a moment to pay tribute to the memory of Nancy Haseltine. She had turned her back upon the fascination of wealth and comfort and social distinction at home. She was the faithful comrade of him to whom she

had given her heart in girlhood. She journeyed with him for 14 years over land and sea and through crowded cities and trackless jungles. She shared his studies and privations; she illumined his hours of gloom with her beaming presence and with a heroism and fidelity unparalleled in the annals of Missions, she soothed the sufferings of his imprisonment with her quenchless hope and faith and love.

Moulmein.

It was a mere trick of politics that shifted the centre of commerce from Amherst to Moulmein, twenty-five miles up the coast, and Judson followed the tide of population. Some of you know Moulmein from Rudyard Kipling:

" By the old Moulmein pagoda lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a Burmah girl a-settin' and I know she thinks o' me,
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells
 they say
' Come you back, you British soldier, come you back to
 Mandalay ! '

* * *

On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flying fishes play
An' the dawn comes up like thunder
Outer China 'crost the Bay."

But it was not Kipling who immortalized that name of "Moulmein." That was done in the last 23 years of Judson's life. And the dawn he saw arise did not "come up like thunder" with a sudden crash of glory. It was a slow and painful rising of the sun. The crimson splashes of light were repeatedly quenched in darkness. He was now forty years of age and

what did he have to show. His brave wife was dead; his two children were in the grave; his missionary force was scattered; his health was broken beyond repair; his work at Ava wiped out; his work at Amherst gone; his church at Rangoon reduced to 4 members, and what broke his heart more than all else, as it breaks the missionaries' hearts to this day, was the utter apathy of the Churches at home and their failure to send on the reinforcements needed for his staff.

But the heroic spirit was not daunted. From this centre he pushed his forces out. The Wades and the Boardmans were his noble helpers. It was here he completed, after 17 years of labor upon it, the translation of the Bible into Burmese. In some ways this is Judson's greatest monument. He spent seven years in revising it after the translation, for he had a "lust for finishing." "We may venture the opinion," says one great authority, "that as Luther's Bible is now in the hands of Protestant Germany, so three centuries hence, Judson's Bible will be the Bible of the Christian Churches of Burmah." It was here the fruitage of the long years began to come and in 1831 he reported 217 baptisms. It was here in 1835—eight years after his wife's death—that he married the widow of George Dana Boardman, a brilliant and devoted young missionary who died four years before. George Dana Boardman left one little son who bore his name. It was that lad, sent to America at six

years of age for the sake of his health and his education, who afterwards became the great Doctor Boardman of Philadelphia, and it will serve to link that far away path with us to-night when I tell you that it was this same Dr. Boardman who in 1894 preached the first baccalaureate sermon of McMaster University in this Church where we are assembled to-night. I can remember well his round bullet head, packed with brain energy, as he preached to us of the great archetypal plan of the life of Christ, from this text: "See that thou make all things after the pattern shown thee on the Mount."

It was from Moulmein in 1845, after an absence of 33 years, that Judson made his first and only visit to America. Even then he did not come for his own sake but to save, if possible, the life of Mrs. Judson — the mother of his six children. She was a noble woman, cast in the same heroic mould as Ann of Ava. When she came to Burmah as Boardman's bride, she was pronounced by her English friends "the most finished and faultless specimen of American womanhood that they had ever known." Her health was badly broken and it was hoped that the voyage home might restore her, but near to St. Helena her spirit slipped away, and her dust sleeps to-day on that rocky Island where the war-like spirit of the great Napoleon went out to meet the God of Battles.

Last Years.

Judson remained in America a year. Before his return he married Miss Emily Chubbuck—a woman

of distinguished literary and religious attainments—and together they returned to Moulmein. But the years had told on Judson's strength. Four years longer his wasted frame bore up against the battle but his life was spent. In the hope of recuperation, he started on a sea voyage. The sea had never failed to renew him, but the time had come for his rest from his labors, and nine days out at sea his soul slipped from its leash of flesh, and the poor body, bearing branded upon it the marks of the Lord Jesus, found an unmarked sepulchre in the vast and wandering ocean to wait the hour when Earth and Sea shall give up their dead.

The Message for To-day.

So ends, in this brief and imperfect outline, the story of Judson's life. But before I close there are two messages at least from this story that I must press home upon your minds. The first is that the harvest of the Cross is reaped in sacrifice and no sacrifice shall fail to reap its harvest. Judson lived to see of the travail of his soul. When he went to Burmah he hoped to see a church of 100 members established before he died. But Burmah had 7000 converts when Judson's life ended—to say nothing of the many hundreds of others who had already died in the faith. There were 63 churches and 163 missionaries and workers, with a Burmese Bible and a Burmese dictionary almost complete. To-day there are reported 65,000 Baptist communicants and 90,000

who profess the name of Christ. Last year the native Churches alone contributed the splendid sum of \$90,000 for the support of their work. But it was not done without blood. It never is. It will not be done to-day except in gifts and prayers and toil that bear the blood stain of the Cross upon them.

“For all through life I see a Cross, where sons of God yield up their breath.

There is no gain except by loss ; there is no life except by death.

There is no vision but by faith, nor glory but by bearing shame,

Nor justice but by taking blame, and that eternal passion saith,

Be emptied of honor and right and name.”

My second lesson is this:—The wheel of time has brought us round to-day to a world situation that parallels the world situation of 100 years ago and the chance and the call for heroes is repeated in the challenges of God. Japan has stepped out into the atmosphere of western civilization for better or for worse. China is awakening from the long sleep of centuries to see what can be seen, to hear what can be heard. India is feeling the stirring of a great impulse that is moving towards self-government in the days that are ahead. France, recoiling from Romanism, lapsed into atheism but the tide of evangelical spirit is flowing back again. Germany, groaning under militarism, is driving towards socialism but it is a socialism that is calling for some note of hope and victory. Russia is a great blind giant staggering

into the light. The cloud that hovers over Africa like a pall is tracked with light that burns from martyrs' blood. Young men and women, you have lighted upon great days. For some of us it cannot now be given to take the field abroad but you have still the chance, and the challenge of God summons you to step into the ranks of the Immortals. And I know of no greater celebration of this Centennial than the consecration of some of these noblest young lives to that cause for which Judson gave himself.

- - - We must bear the brunt of danger.
We the youthful, sinewy races. All the rest on us depend.
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never ^{quickly filled,}
stopping.
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call, hark! how loud and clear I
Swift! to the head of the army! Swift! spring to your places, ^{hear it wind,}
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

die.

